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ABSTRACT

The work of Gee and Purves helps provide a framework for understanding cultural contexts and contextual boundaries of literacy. Gee (1991) uses the term "discourse"--a socially accepted association among ways of using language that can identify one as a member of a social context--synonymously with cultural context. Purves' (1991) work supports and adds to Gee's work, although his thinking arises from the perspective of functions of curriculum as a sort of context. When defined within cultural context, the main criterion for literacy is whether the individual functions adequately within his/her cultural context. To determine the extent to which respondents from Bridget's Harbor, Newfoundland, were versed and empowered in cultural ways and in their use of literacy, researchers used data on their participation in or perception of activities/factors. Findings indicated the following: respondents were culturally thoughtful within their primary culture and functioned well within this cultural context; they had learned their culture well; they knew the social mores; they were involved in subsistence activities; they had acquired a range of skills; they engaged in meaningful literacy tasks; were active in community life; had strong family ties and many friends; and they had positive and strong self-images. Forces from the extended culture were having a negative effect. The closure of the fishery and fish plant destroyed a locale where community values were continually being professed among the community workers and removed from them a sense of community control. (Contains 14 references.) (YLB)

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LITERACY ONLINE

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LITERACY AND CULTURAL THOUGHTFULNESS: THE POWER AND HELPLESSNESS WITHIN AND BEYOND CULTURAL BOUNDARIES

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Literacy cannot be separated from peoples' sociocultural contexts and from their self-conceptualizations within those contexts. A person's literacy functioning will depend upon the role literacy plays in meeting one's goals and in the resulting construction of one's self-image. Within context, not only written language, but the interaction between written and oral language modes becomes important in defining literacy competence.

The purposes of this paper are to: (1) understand how literacy and subcultures interact, and (2) to consider the implications of cultural boundaries for literacy development.

CULTURAL CONTEXTS

Culture is generally defined as a bond or force amongst a community of people. Spradley describes it as a "cognitive map" - the categories, plans and rules which these people "use to interpret their world and act purposefully within it" (Spradely 1974: 2). Culture becomes a meaning system in which people interpret the behavior of others, formulate their plans of action, and form concepts of themselves based on their successes and failures. A cultural community may reflect a unit of varying sizes from the context of culture in cross-cultural studies (often equated with country, or at least

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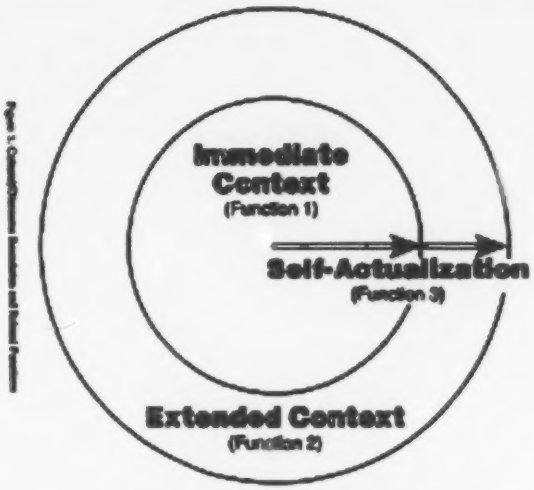
with race within a country) to a more immediate or local context involving family, and close friends.

The work of Gee and Purves help provide a framework for understanding cultural contexts and contextual boundaries. Gee uses the term "discourse" which may be used synonymously with cultural context; he defines "discourse" as "a socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a 'social network'" (Gee 1991:3). Gee distinguishes primary discourse from secondary discourse, and thereby draws a discourse or contextual boundary. He points out that all people acquire a primary discourse or become part of a primary context. He states that, "All humans, barring serious disorder, get one form of discourse free, so to speak, and this through acquisition. This is our socio-culturally determined way of using our native language in face-to-face communication with intimates (intimates are people with whom we share a great deal of knowledge because of a great deal of contact and similar experiences)" (Gee 1991: 7). Oral language is a key medium within one's primary discourse or context. However, unless one lives a very secluded life, he/she moves into other discourses or contexts, which Gee refers to as secondary contexts. While it is difficult to define conditions for a precise boundary, the participants and the interrelationships within the context change. The participants tend to be non-intimates, and oral language is no longer the primary medium, being replaced by written language and the various forms of written expression (memos, forms, dossiers, etc). The degree of differences in values, traditions, and oral language between primary and secondary contexts will depend on the geographical base of the participants. Furthermore, there may be several secondary contexts, extending outward from the primary, so that in contexts most distant from the primary, the social interrelationships are more formal, the medium of communication more technical and impersonal. Collectivism is replaced with a doctrine of individualism.

Purves' work supports and adds to Gee's work in defining cultural contexts, although Purves' thinking arises from a different perspective, from that of curriculum building and the functions of curriculum. However, with some license in interpreting Purves' concepts, curriculum may be defined as a sort of context with content, players, interaction, and goals or functions. The concept of curriculum may be extended to mean cultural curriculum or life curriculum. In order to be an accepted and functioning individual within one's cultural context, the cultural curriculum must fill three functions: (1) to develop cultural loyalty, to know the expectation of one's primary culture, (2) to move beyond the primary context and learn how to interact with a wide range of people in terms of the use of oral and written language, tasks, and activities, and (3) to actualize oneself as an individual, to formulate goals and plans peculiar to oneself, to map out a course of action for one's future (Purves 1991). A combination of Gee's and Purves' thoughts in defining cultural context may be represented diagramatically as in Figure 1. The terms "immediate" and "extended" context have been used, keeping in mind, that cultural contexts can extend over a wide range, becoming more and more removed from the immediate or primary one.



LITERACY AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

Gee states that "Learning to read is always some aspect of some discourse" (Gee 1991: 6). Therefore, a question about literacy is not whether literacy is cultural, but which cultural literacy shall be promoted. Another vital question is how the context of school shall be conceptualized; is it part of one's immediate or extended context? The answer depends on how the context of school is structured. If the school curriculum is compatible with the children's immediate cultural context, and supports it, while extending it, then the transition from home to school may be minimal and school may be viewed within the immediate context. However, should school, while involving familiar players (friends), enact a set of rules not familiar within the immediate context, ignore what is culturally significant within that context (including the forms of oral language), and replace it with language, forms, and values from an extended context, then the gap between home and school widens. The possible distinction of the cultural boundaries of home and school contexts raises another important issue, and that is, the manner in which literacy is conceptualized within both.

Interestingly, when literacy is referred to as contextual, it refers to literacy outside of school. Because of its blandness and internal consistency, literacy within school has been labeled "vanilla literacy" (Venezky 1990). School literacy is very much an individualistic enterprise, so much so, that schools often overlook what young children entering school have learned within the context of the home (the child's immediate or primary context) (Smith 1987). Literacy outside the school takes on a much broader contextual or relative meaning. It tends to operate within a framework of collaboration or collectivism and tends to be task rather than text oriented (Purves 1987). That is, literacy is an integral part of peoples' lives and results in the accomplishment of tasks, whether of understanding or sorting out ideas, communicating or socially interacting with others, making points of view, attaining services, or bringing about change. Literacy within school is often "bookish" or text bound and is measured or assessed in bookish or written language situations; if there is an attempt to simulate cultural meaningful tasks as a basis for assessing literacy, these tasks are often contrived. This is most evident on literacy survey measures which often purport to use tasks that are "functional" in nature; but how can a task such as circling the expiration date on a driver's license be authentic? When does one circle the expiration date on a copy of a driver's license (which in a survey is not even a copy of the person's own license; in fact the respondent may not have a driver's license), and even if a person did have a driver's license, would he/she circle the expiration date at the request of a stranger being paid to gather data for an agency within an extended context? The literacy of one's cultural context interrelates with the world and word. The meaning generated from the word cannot be divorced from the meaning which has been generated from the world of the cultural context. Not just the interpretation of written language but also the interpretation of oral language is dependent upon the context in which it occurs, a point often unknown or ignored by "educated" and "literate" people from an extended context. For example, the visit of a

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bureaucrat to a small fishing community during the closure of the fishery and their livelihood can only best be understood against all factors within that community to which the people are privy, not just the immediate ruling, but against the knowledge of the people and their interrelationships with one another and with the bureaucrat, their past traditions, values, and experiences, their insights, fears, and concerns for the future. Any information provided by bureaucrats, no matter how optimistic, must be weighed against the life space and life history of the people. Sadly, the bureaucrat's message if not grounded within the cultural context of the people may have little realism compared to the situation as it actually exists.

A definition of literacy from a cultural context notion must be relative. As Winterowd points out, "Its meaning depends on individual needs and values and the norms and expectations of the social groups of which the individual is a part" (Winterowd 1989: xii). As an example, he cites an episode involving a teenager who could understand instructions on a job application form, and could fill it out, but who had problems reading the daily paper. The teenager, according to Winterowd, might consider himself literate and be so considered by family and friends. But if the teenager were placed in another context with people who highly valued newspaper reading, he might be labeled illiterate. Because contextual literacy is collective or collaborative in nature, so called illiterate adults are neither dependent, dysfunctional, nor deficient. Such adults often live in interactive and supportive environments. They view reading and writing "as only two of the many instrumental skills and knowledge resources that combined, are required for daily life (Fingeret 1983: 133-134). Educators, usually from an extended and different cultural context than low-literacy adults, are often amazed, even shocked that illiterate adults have been very resourceful in finding ways to circumvent their lack of skill in reading and writing. Such behaviors are looked upon with shame by these educators, and the adults, often sensing this attitude, also admit shamefully, their "ruses" for dealing with literacy tasks, rather than being congratulated for their achievements in the face of adversity, and their ingenuity in their ability to function adequately without the necessary literacy skills.

Literacy, then, when defined within cultural context, must be defined as relative to that particular context; it is for this reason, that it is important to accept the notion of cultural contexts, somewhat in the sense as delineated in this paper. The main criterion for literacy is whether the individual functions adequately within his/her cultural context. This entails more than being a passive member of one's cultural context, it means being culturally thoughtful (Worsham 1988). A study of peoples' ability to read and use sales flyers within a particular cultural context and to use their oral language and background knowledge to support their interpretation of written documents, showed how they functioned more effectively than "more educated outsiders"(Fagan 1993). It must be emphasized that the individual is not subservient to the context. Rather, the individual interprets context including cultural wisdom in creating his/her own role, his/her own self-image. Individuals must strive to be consciously aware of their roles, their identities, their functioning, and must try and control any changes that adversely affect their status. In this way, individuals empower themselves. Empowerment does not always mean "getting the upper hand"; while it may involve action against an external agent, it may also result in a greater understanding of how the individual locates him/herself within the community amidst present circumstances, and how his/her life is shaped by values and traditions thereby providing a sense of inner-control.

Literacy standards can only be interpreted against literacy functioning and literacy functioning can only be determined against the behavior, the self-image, and quality of life of the individual. One of the problems with educators from extended contexts proposing literacy as a cure for all ills is that it ignores the reality of peoples' contextual contexts. Research has failed to prove that education (literacy) reduces poverty, or is essential to its reduction (Duke 1983). "Adult education is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the reduction of the poverty of groups, communities, and classes" (Duke 1983: 77). Giroux makes a similar point:

> "To be literate is not to be free; it is to be present and active in the struggle for reclaiming one's voice, history, and future. Just as illiteracy does not explain the causes of massive unemployment, bureaucracy, or the growing racism in major cities in the United States, South Africa, or elsewhere, literacy neither automatically reveals nor guarantees social, political, or economic freedom" (Giroux 1988: 65).
>
> "The context is the thing!"

DATA ON LITERACY FUNCTIONING FROM A CONTEXTUAL SETTING

Data on literacy functioning were collected over a two year period in a rural area of Canada through ethnographic and survey methodologies. The primary ethnographic techniques of participation and observation were employed during the first year of the study. Based on an analysis of journal notes, common issues/concerns/trends were noted and an interview was structured to obtain further information on the generalizability of these across different cohort groups.

The study was conducted in a rural Newfoundland area on the Avalon peninsula. The particular area under investigation constituted a parish, referred to as St. Bridget's parish. The area was founded on the fishery and at the time of the study, a moratorium on fishing for cod, the main form of fishing in the area had been implemented. The fisherpeople and plant workers were being compensated with an income program known as TAGS (The Atlantic Groundfish Strategy) or "The Package".

Bridget's Harbour was settled in the early 1600's by the Basques, later to be followed by the English and then the Irish who arrived towards end of the eighteenth century. The economy has always been focused on the fishery and in times past was very successful. The area is replete with remnants of history, from 180 year old houses to cannons, the latter as reminders of the struggles in times past for control and protection. The overall population in the parish at the time of the study approximated 1600. The religion was predominantly Roman Catholic, although a number of people were no longer "church-goers". All except, one were native English speakers. According to the 1991 National Census, there were approximate equal numbers of males and females in the area, 94.4 percent of the people owned their homes and 91.5 percent of families were two parent families.

Four of the groups who were respondents to a structured interview approximated four generations: high school students, young adults, mid-adults, and senior adults. The three adult groups would be considered "illiterate" according to Statistics Canada Census criterion of literacy since they had not completed grade nine. A second young adult group was chosen who had completed high school and who would meet the literacy criterion. The final group consisted of the teachers in the parish. Information on the interview respondents is given in Table 1.

Table 1
Data on Interview Respondents

	High School	Young Adult	Mid Adult	Senior Adult	Young Adult (HS)	Teachers
Number	30	25	25	25	25	27
Mean age	17.6	33.7	52.1	74.6	34.5	39.9
Male	14	13	12	12	11	8
Female	16	12	13	13	13	19

The overall percentages of male and female interview respondents were 44.5 and 55.5, respectively; if the teachers' data were removed, the percentages would be 47.6 and 52.4.

The people of the Bridget's Harbour area, like many Newfoundlanders have a strong sense of history and pride in that history. While Newfoundland had European settlers since around the year 1000, it has been a Canadian province for just over 40 years. The senior adults and the mid-adults all remember a time when they were not Canadians. As an independent country prior to the 1930's (at that time due to economic hardships, independent rule was suspended in Newfoundland and it was ruled by a Commission made up of members from Britain and Newfoundland), Newfoundland had its own flag, its national anthem, and its own currency. The pride of Newfoundlanders in their history and their identity is due to many factors, one being that the province of Newfoundland is relatively isolated (made up of the island of Newfoundland and Labrador) and another being in its bonds across generations. Young and

old intermingle seemingly unnoticing age differences. While there have been many changes, the closeness of the community and its people are still obvious.

With the coming of the Irish, the Catholic Church became a strong presence and remained so until about two decades ago when with the shortage of priests and the closure of convents, its presence was less obvious. While still the only religion in the area, a large number of people are not regular church goers although attendance at weddings and funerals is large.

In earlier days many of the people left in search of a better life, usually for the United States until 1949 when Newfoundland became a province of Canada when they then migrated mainly to Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia. By the 1950's the population of Bridget's Harbour was slowly decreasing; by the 1960's and 1970's however, more young people were staying at home and more houses were being built. The younger generation was usually employed in the fishery which at time also began to employ women, so for many families there were two-person incomes.

POWER WITHIN AND ACROSS CULTURAL BOUNDARIES

Power within cultural boundaries is determined by the degree to which an individual has gained access to his/her culture including the acquisition of competencies practiced by that culture. The lives of individuals are not constructed around literacy; their problems tend not to be literacy related and therefore necessitate other solutions (Hunter and Harman 1979). As individuals learn the skills/activities/ socialization of their culture, they can then mediate or operate upon their culture to their advantage. Furthermore, such competencies are usually learned in an apprenticeship manner by watching and helping others. As new problems are encountered, adaptations of old solutions and new solutions are devised so that culture is both transmitted and transformed (Ong 1982).

In order to determine the extent to which the respondents of Bridget's Harbour were versed and empowered in cultural ways, and also in their use of literacy, data are used from their participation in, or perception of the following activities/factors: socialization, support for the education of the youth, engagement in subsistence activities, competencies in home-related skills, access to news/information from extended cultures, self-concept, and satisfaction with current life situation. Literacy in the lives of the respondents was investigated in terms of the observation of peoples' involvement in literacy tasks, their strategies in using literacy with significant contacts from extended cultures, and community support for literacy resources.

Socialization: The respondents were part of a highly organized community social infrastructure: church, health, charity, crafts, family, and seniors. The degree of participation in community events was exceptionally high, ranging from 75 percent of the youth to 80 percent of the seniors; the percent of teacher participation was 63. Showers, for example, were held at a community level on the occasion of births, and wedding engagements but these were also held for family members who had long left the area and were living in other parts of the country. While removed thousands of kilometers geographically, they were still considered integral members of the family and the community and participated ex loco. On a more informal level, the preferred social task by all groups was talk with family, friends, and neighbors, this type of socialization being preferred over reading or watching TV.

Support for youth education: In general, the respondents believed that resources for the education of the children, including qualifications of teachers, were more than adequate. This view was more often voiced by older residents who compared past to current conditions. In general, respondents believed that the most important support they could provide for the education of youth was encouragement; other forms of support included helping with homework, checking that homework had been completed, and providing the basic necessities of food, clothing, and shelter. The teacher was still considered the key person in the education of youth and was held in great respect in this role. When parents visited school, it was usually at the teachers' request or to support school activities such as school concerts.

Engagement in subsistence activities and other skills: There was a high degree of participation in subsistence activities, particularly in cutting firewood, house repair/renovation, car/truck repairs, gardening, trapping/hunting, fishing for own

use, berry picking/preserves, and sewing/making clothes. The degree of involvement varied by the nature of the activity and the respondent group. For example, 84 and 92 percent of the two older groups were involved in berry picking/ preserves, while 100 percent of the young adult groups were involved in car/truck repairs.

In addition, the respondents acknowledged competency in a range of home-related and social skills, from cooking to plumbing to playing a musical instrument. The respondents demonstrated competence in multiple skills. There was also a trade-off factor, so that a person with skill in electrical work may provide help in this area to another person, who in turn might help with chimney repairs. Large and extended families and wide circles of friends made it easy to access someone competent in a particular skill.

Access to information from extended cultures: Regardless of group and corresponding literacy level, 90 percent of the youth group and all of respondents from the other groups regularly listened to the TV evening news. Validity for their responses was based on the fact that all were able to name the top current news stories in the nation and in the world. Between 56 and 76 percent of all groups except teachers, listened to an Open Line talk show. Respondents became involved in issues/concerns by making these issues known through song or drama, or if the issue extended beyond the community, such as the proposed privatization of hydro facilities, through demonstration.

Quality of life conditions: In general the respondents had a very positive self-concept with over 75 percent of most groups (100 percent of some groups) maintaining that they had close family ties, had lots of friends, got along with others, worked hard, and felt competent at what they did. They took pride in their accomplishments of having provided for a family, of owing their own house, of having access to health services, and in spite of the downturn in the economy, having financial security. From 88 percent of the young adults to 100 percent of the seniors felt that there was no better place than Bridget's Harbour; they mentioned the security of family and friends, freedom from crime, clean air, and relaxing life style. The percentage of the youth group thinking this way was 66 percent, and for the teachers, 70 percent.

Literacy related activities: The respondents did not always separate literacy as reading and writing from literacy as using language. Many of their literacy activities were collective or collaborative in nature: a spouse hands a partner a pencil and paper to make a grocery list, a person finishing writing a letter asks a friend to address the envelope, a person asks another to read a column from the daily paper about a significant local issue, a person in a group discussion reads a portion of a document to support a point. The respondents viewed school literacy and their literacy differently; in fact their views were very similar to the points made on this topic earlier in this paper - literacy in school was mainly an individual task with individual responsibility, while their literacy was community oriented with community support.

One form of support of which the respondents availed was the use of scribes in dealing with officials from the extended culture via the printed medium. This form of literacy support had been traditional; the players (scribes) were changing. Whereas in former years, the clergy most often acted as literacy mediators, at present, the elected member to the provincial government (MHA), and the doctor or nurse were the key scribes. The people choose wisely. If the matter to be resolved concerned government or government related departments, they enlisted the help of the MHA; if the matter concerned access to health services, or disputes over health matters, the doctor or nurse was called on.

The involvement of the people in reading for leisure was not based on group membership but on individuals within groups. While one person read all the recent best sellers, subscribed to several magazines, and availed of other reading material, others volunteered that they rarely read, using their time for other activities. There was no community or public library. While there was a school library which served the children, who interestingly seemed to read mainly for school purposes rather than for leisure, there were few book resources for adults.

Summary. There was no doubt that the respondents were culturally thoughtful within their primary culture and functioned well within this cultural context. They had learned their culture well, and regardless of age or literacy level, knew the social mores, were involved in subsistence activities, had acquired a range of skills, engaged in literacy tasks that were meaningful to them, were active in the life of the community, had strong family ties, had many friends, had positive and strong self-images, and were generally satisfied with their lives in Bridget's Harbour.

THE HELPLESSNESS ACROSS CULTURAL BOUNDARIES

While the people of Bridget's Harbour functioned well within their community/cultural structure, their lives could not always be confined within their community boundaries and the encroachment on their lives by forces from the extended culture were beginning to have a negative effect. Information on the impact of the extended culture was derived from participation in, or perception of the following factors or activities: work, perceived relationship between educational/literacy level and work, leadership and future plans, outmigration, changes within the church, communication, and media reports.

Work related factors: The most pressing concern for the respondents was the lack of employment. With the closure of the fishery, the situation was even more bleak, although a government subsidy was being provided for a period of time during the fishery closure. The people felt that there should be more investment in creating jobs, particularly jobs of a long term nature. They felt that too much of the little money available was spent on administration rather than on job creation. There were varied perceptions on the "weak" economic base of the community, being dependent largely on government support. This was most often criticized by the teachers and the youth as merely being a stop-gap measure, with unfortunate consequences when it was no longer available. The other groups, however, involving many recipients took a more pragmatic perspective, summed up by one person's comment *"That's all there is, so we can't complain".*

Perceived relationship between educational/literacy level and work. With the closure of the fishery and the provision of government subsidy, an adult education center was set up in the community; the common belief being that unless those displaced by the fishery closure attended this school, their income subsidy would be discontinued. Consequently, large numbers of people enrolled in the school program, the goal being to obtain a school leaving certificate. For many, this was an opportunity they had not had earlier in life, and it filled in time that was now available to them. However, for some, it was a detraction from that positive self-concept that had been developed; it was a statement that they were deficient in a particular skill/area but it was not clear what they would gain by removing that deficit.

The respondents were quite realistic about the relationship between level of education/literacy and employment or being admitted to a trades program with a view to employment. Large percentages of all groups except the youth (this could be explained by their lack of work experience), knew of people with good employment and low levels of literacy, and people with high academic qualifications and no work. They maintained that experience, connections, and personal-social factors were important in addition to education in obtaining employment. They emphasized the importance of experience and questioned (in some cases, scoffed at) those who believed that all useful knowledge could be found in books. Overall, they had come to the same conclusion as Duke that education/literacy was a necessary but not sufficient condition for employment or preparation for employment.

Outmigration. Leaving the province had always been a part of the way of life of Bridget's Harbour. Outmigration was seen by some as an opportunity for advancement of a career; however, this applied to the smaller number of people leaving, people who usually had university or college degrees. For the majority, outmigration was foisted upon them; there was no work; there was no livelihood; they had no choice but to leave. With strong traditional family and community values, this was a difficult decision for many. Once again the respondents were realistic about this. They advised that those leaving should at least have completed school and those with high school or better, should try and secure a job, or at least seek out a support system before leaving their province. As indicated above, even though many people left for other parts of the country, and were removed geographically by perhaps thousands of kilometers, they were never considered as leaving the family, and being inaccessible to community support.

Leadership and future plans. While the respondents felt in control of their community/cultural context, they did not feel party to the actions/ intentions of officials from the extended culture. With the closure of the fishery, there had been much publicity about the role "professional fisherpersons" would play in a revised fishery. But the concept of professional fisherpersons had never been delineated, nor had roles been identified. The people felt in a "state of limbo". With the closure of the fishery the people were asked to make one of four decisions: retire (if at the criterion age), retire from the fishery, retrain/re-educate for work outside the fishery, or for work within the fishery. Yet they could see no difference in the educational opportunities offered to them regardless of which of the last two decisions they made. Yet their lives, at least in a revised fishery, were at the mercy of the bureaucracy from an extended culture; they were on hold. They did not know the strategies or procedures for bringing pressure on government and union officials to provide

some information, and bring some closure to this period of their lives. One youth best summarized the peoples' feelings: *"You just can't live year by year without knowing what's going on, what's going to come next. And even if you can't know exactly what the future holds, you can have different (contingency) plans".*

Changes within the church. The Catholic church had always been a mainstay of the residents of Bridget's Harbour and much of the community activity was centered around the church. In past years, the people had looked for and had often obtained community leadership from the church. They felt that the church and the school, which was closely related to the church, reinforced the values promoted in the home and vice versa. But the church had gone through a number of changes. While it might have been described as a patriarchy, now it was perceived as being run by an oligarchy, a group of friends of the church hierarchy. This was a cause for division amongst community members. The Nuns, after 100 years in the community had left. Many of the people felt let down by the church; they felt alienated. Even though the school was still run by the church, the majority did not know the geographic location of the school board. Their ties to church and church related values were becoming impersonal and tenuous.

Communication. People were feeling frustrated with modern technology. Within their primary cultural context, warm personal expressions of interpersonal interaction, even in business, were common: "ducky", "dearie", "love", "buddy", "guy", "skipper". Trying to get through to contacts within extended cultural contexts, often meant being put on hold, or even worse, been faced with a recording that gave them several buttons to push, only to be returned to recorded music, after following all the directions. The people felt that bureaucracy and business were becoming more machine oriented and less people directed. They also felt that there own local community council was resorting to impersonal and formal communication measures. Written language, often with legal implications, was replacing the more informal oral language interaction.

Media reports/publicity. Media reports had considerable impact on the peoples' self-concept and on their satisfaction with and quality of life. In terms of self-concept, the use of the results of literacy surveys were most damning. Constantly they heard or saw that almost 50 percent of them (the citizens of the province) were illiterate. They saw posters with slogans such as "illiteracy is not a sin, but it sure is hell". They had difficulty reconciling this image from the media/publicity with the positive self-image and comfortable way of life that they had established.

Media reports also raised considerable tension about their future, since almost all reports were pessimistic. They sought for hope, any hope, but rarely found any in the media. Instead they turned to their own cultural context, to their observations and consoled themselves in what they saw. For example, in spite of media and scientific reports that the fish had gone, they could see that there were significant numbers of fish in their area, and they clung to this hope.

Summary. The closure of the fishery and fish plant in Bridget's Harbour destroyed not only the hub of the economic activity of the community but also a locale where community values were continually being professed among the community workers. It also removed from them a sense of community control which was now passed to bureaucrats and officials from an extended culture. The relation of current events (academic upgrading, outmigration, changes within the church, communication with the bureaucracy, media reports, and absence of information on a revised fishery) to an uncertain future was leading to a state of helplessness. As one person said about the outcome of the present events, *"you'll wake up to find the deed is done"*. Within the current situation they could only wait; they were not prepared *"to look a gift horse in the mouth"*, and even if they did, they were not aware of how they could formulate a plan of action to empower themselves under the current conditions.

IMPLICATIONS

1. The first implication from this study is to understand culture, not only as distinctive of countries or race, but as comprising cultural contexts. Depending on the geography, history, and tradition of various peoples, there may be significant differences between their primary cultures and extended cultures. Also depending on these and other factors, the boundaries between primary or immediate and extended contexts may be strong or faint.
2. Literacy can only be understood within cultural contexts. It can not be separated from the other skills and activities in which people involve themselves and from which they fashion their self-images.

3. Assessing literacy competence or standards is impossible with pencil and paper tasks. The literacy of people is integral to the functioning of that person within his/her cultural context; and literacy functioning can only be assessed within the context of one's overall functioning.
4. A literacy or academic program must take into account that a person may function well in literacy within her/his immediate cultural context but not in an extended cultural context. The program must be pragmatic in meeting the peoples' needs. Literacy development should not be for the sake of literacy development, a common goal of bureaucrats, but for the needs of the people. Education and government officials must be prepared to accept that if a person has been living happily within her/his immediate cultural context, continues to live happily, and has no intention of changing her/his life style, then pushing that person to attain additional competence in literacy does not make sense.
5. What literacy programs, whether adult centers or school programs, should focus on is the development of critical reading, writing, and interpretative skills that allow the participants access to extended cultural contexts, that provide them with the know-how to impact upon these contexts when they encroach on their primary context, and to know how to advocate and mobilize in order to bring about change that meets their goals.
6. Academic upgrading programs must bear a distinct relationship to enrollment in trades programs, if the latter is the goal of the participants. Certainly, skills and experiences related to the trade of one's choice must be taken into account. There should be integrated academic upgrading programs and trade skills programs in which the academic skills (including literacy, and numeracy) should relate directly to the content of the trade skills and should be taught concurrently.
7. Bureaucrats, officials, and the media must understand the notion of cultural contexts. Bureaucrats and officials will hopefully enter primary cultural contexts with respect for the people there and the many assets which often mark their lives rather than entering with a deficit perspective and as the bearers of the answers to all questions, and with solutions to all problems. In many cases the bureaucrat or official is just as non-functioning within a primary cultural context as the people of that primary cultural context are in an extended cultural context. Likewise the media in understanding cultural contexts should avoid generalizations across contexts, and should try and balance their reporting of negative with positive events.
8. Finally, leaders must begin to look at quality and richness of life from the point of view of people who maintain there is quality and richness in
their lives. Too often decisions are made only on the basis of economics; yet in the long run, because of the destruction of traditions, values, customs and behaviors, the results of decisions based on economics only, are much more costly to all. How one gets leaders (used in the broadest political, business, and institutional sense) to develop a mind set that recognizes values from the perspective of the people, especially when these values are in opposition to their own, may, unfortunately, be an impossible dream. However, this should provide greater incentive and challenge for educators to promote the strength of people within their immediate or primary contexts, and to assist those for whom it is pertinent, to extend control over their destiny within extended cultural contexts.

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